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DR. S. A. HIRSCH'S BOOK OF ESSAYS.

A Book of Essays, by S. A. HIRSCH, Ph. D., Joint Editor of the Greek Grammar of Roger Bacon and a Fragment of his Hebrew Grammar. Published for the Jewish Historical Society of England by Macmillan & Co., Limited, London, 1905. Pp. xiii, 336.

The Jewish Historical Society is to be congratulated on the publication of this sumptuous volume, which contains something for everybody, and should yield both pleasure and instruction to readers of diverse tastes and tendencies. Themes new and old, learned and popular, rub shoulders here. Yet the mode of treatment throughout is so fresh that the erudite becomes bright and popular, while the popular has dignity and distinction. The eight essays included in the book are each complete in itself, yet not altogether mutually disconnected. Three of them—"Early English Hebraists: Roger Bacon and his Predecessors"; "Johann Pfefferkorn and the Battle of the Books"; "Johann Reuchlin, the Father of the Study of Hebrew among Christians,"—present us with a connected account of the advancement of Hebrew learning in Christian Europe. Three other essays—"Israel a Nation"; "Jewish Philosophy of Religion and Samson Raphael Hirsch"; "A Survey of Jewish Literature,"—give us a fairly full account of the author's philosophy of Judaism. The two remaining essays are devoted to "The Jewish Sibylline Oracles," and "Some Literary Trifles." The volume also contains eight interesting illustrations—Roger Bacon, and two facsimiles of pages from his MSS.; Johann Reuchlin, and a facsimile of two pages of his musical notation of the Hebrew accents; Samson Raphael Hirsch; Two Sibyls (after Rafael); J. v. Vondel. Readers of the *J. Q. R.* will recognize old friends in six of the essays, while yet a seventh seems to have cast its shadow across these pages as the indirect cause of the discussion on the character of Jewish literature (vols. XV and XVI). Two of the essays, treating as they do of present-day problems, may claim our special attention here.

"Israel a Nation" grapples with the question of Jewish nationalism, which Zionism has brought into prominence. It was read at the Zionist Conference, 1898. "How," asks Dr. Hirsch, "can it possibly be denied that the Jews constitute a nation? I shall not dwell on the minute psychological traits that are hardly observable to the naked eye, and a number of which combine in the composition of a national body. It is enough for our purpose to know that those distinguishing marks through which nation differs from nation ac-

cordova to the most rough-and-ready estimate, are extant in greater numbers in our Jewish nation than in any other of those that exist at the present day. What we Jews all over the world have in common is our ancient religion, our associations with our ancient land, our ancient language, our sacred literature, our glorious and unique history, and our descent. Which other nation at the present day can show such a combination of so many elements of cohesion?" The impartial consideration of this question has probably suffered in the heat of recent controversy. It happens not uncommonly that the aggressive advocacy of a policy goads its opponents to the denial of things much less disputable, which, rightly or wrongly, are adduced in support of that policy. This is what Zionism seems to have done for the question of Jewish nationalism. If by claiming to be a "nation" we mean no more, possibly even less, than is implied in the above extract, then the claim seems valid enough. Etymologically, at all events, the word "nation" simply indicates common descent. And that much can scarcely be denied us with any justice, even if it be allowed that our descent is not "of that unalloyed purity that we would fain believe in." The trouble begins when Jewish nationalism is identified with political Zionism. The recognition of our common descent and of our associations with our ancient land does not yet necessarily imply an urgent wish to renew those former intimate associations with Palestine, much less does it imply any readiness to participate in, or even to approve of, a political agitation for the re-acquisition of our ancient land. Political Zionism is thus a very different thing from Jewish nationalism; one may or may not have serious objections to the former, on economic, social, political, or religious grounds, but it does not seem clear how one can legitimately deny the latter. Moreover—as is partly shown in the essay on Jewish literature, and in the discussion above referred to—Jewish history, Jewish literature, and the Jewish religion have certain peculiarities which make it difficult to see how one can mark them off for specific treatment without assuming the existence of a Jewish nation, whose history, literature, and religion they are. The philosophical historian may perhaps discover some peculiar vein running through them, and characterize them that way; but, in the first instance, this history, this literature, and this religion are Jewish just because they are the history, the literature, and the religion of the Jewish nation. Moses Mendelssohn, it may be pointed out, had no compunction about referring to his people as a "nation." Zionism, and every acute manifestation of national self-consciousness, may be the result of anti-semitism, but our nationalism (as Dr. Hirsch rightly maintains) is not.

Some may find it strange that Dr. Hirsch, despite his national enthusiasm and his attachment to the Holy Land, has not joined the Zionist movement. The answer, however, is probably to be found in the sixteenth of the *Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel*, which contains the following reference to Israel's future restoration: "For this future, which is promised us in the glorious predictions of the inspired prophets, whom God raised up for our ancestors, we hope and pray; but actively to accelerate its coming were sin, and is prohibited to us, while the entire purpose of the Messianic age is that we may, in prosperity, exhibit to mankind a better example of 'Israel' than did our ancestors the first time, while hand in hand with us the entire race will be joined in universal brotherhood through the recognition of God, the All-One." Having regard to our author's keen sympathy with his distinguished namesake, our conjecture is not improbable.

This brings us to the essay on Jewish Philosophy of Religion and Samson Raphael Hirsch. Our author makes no secret of his profound veneration for the famous Frankfurt Rabbi. In fact, he is particularly anxious to rouse the suspicion that he is suffering from what Macaulay calls *lues Boswelliana*, the disease of admiration to which biographers and exponents of other people's writings are peculiarly exposed. And his eminent success in this respect inevitably leads one to suppose that in expounding the religious philosophy of the Rabbi of Frankfurt, he is at the same time explaining his own. It is a powerful essay, though in some respects as provoking as it is interesting.

Modern Judaism is taken severely to task, and subjected to a searching criticism. "This 'Modern Judaism' is very, very old. It is as old as Judaism itself." This admission is not exactly meant to be complimentary. Still one has to be grateful for small mercies, seeing that even great Rabbis are not always ready to admit that the path of liberal Judaism is at least as old as any other. When, however, Dr. Hirsch proceeds to call modern Judaism an "anachronism," "a relic of discarded scientific procedures," and similar pretty epithets, the paradox becomes exasperating.

We readily admit that the denunciation against excessive "squeezing and lopping of poor Judaism" contains much that is true and just; but the practice is not monopolized by liberal Jews, far from it. But, whereas official orthodoxy is mostly content to bury its head, like an ostrich, and goes on pretending that all is well in this best of all possible worlds, liberal Judaism looks facts in the face, and strives to meet the reasonable demands of the times. For the rest, some of Dr. Hirsch's declamations may be heard from the

liberal pulpit as from any other; while conservative Rabbis will experience no difficulty to pick out from among their flocks, and even their synagogue dignitaries, not a few who practise the gentle art of "squeezing and lopping poor Judaism" as recklessly as any. So much as regards the practical side of the issue. Let us see now on what grounds modern Judaism is described as "a relic of discarded scientific procedures."

"The characteristic of modern science," says Dr. Hirsch, "is this; that it does not try to construe *a priori* that which can be grasped by the senses; that it does not build up from some preconceived notions arbitrarily posited truths about things which can be brought within the scope of observation. . . . The so-called 'Modern Judaism' failed, and fails to this day to participate in this progress of the time, to utilize the improved method of reasoning. It continues its attempts to construe *a priori* that which is above all a subject of observation; to ignore phenomena if they contradict the preconceived notions from which it tries to construe a Judaism as it should be." Happily, the orthodox Rabbi of Frankfurt succeeded, according to our author, where modern Judaism failed, and still fails. "It is the merit of Samson Raphael Hirsch to have applied to Judaism the improved methods of reasoning," and Dr. Hirsch cannot do better than let this master of method himself explain the keystone to that whole system founded on those improved methods of reasoning. The elucidation is to be found "in a few words modestly put as a note under the text" of the eighteenth of the *Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel*. Here is the note, slightly abridged:—

"Two revelations are given us, Nature and the Torah. For the investigation of either only one method exists. In Nature the phenomena are facts; and we are intent to spy out *a posteriori* the law of every one and the connexion of all. The proof of the truth, or rather of the probability, of our assumptions is again Nature itself, by the phenomena of which we have to test our assumptions, so as to reach the highest degree of certainty ever attainable, namely, to be able to say: Everything actually is as if our assumptions were true; or, in other words, All phenomena brought under our observation can be explained by our assumption. One single opposing phenomenon therefore makes our assumption untenable. . . . Whenever and as long as we have not been able yet to discover the law and the connexion of any phenomenon, which exists as a fact, the phenomenon itself remains a fact for all that. Exactly the same it is with the investigation of the Torah. The Torah is a fact like heaven and earth. The Torah, like Nature, has God for its ultimate cause. A fact can be ignored in neither, even if cause and connexion

is not discovered. . . . As in Nature the phenomenon remains a fact although we have not comprehended it yet as to its cause and connexion, and its existence is not dependent on our investigation but vice versa, thus also the components of the Torah remain the law even if we have not discovered the cause and connexion of a single one."

The reasoning looks very plausible at a glance, and would have been accurate enough, but for the dexterous insertion of two monosyllables in the last sentence. I mean "the law." These two monosyllables make all the difference. Without them the argument is valid, but our Rabbi misses his point; with them our Rabbi gets his point, but the argument breaks down utterly. The argument, in so far as it is really logical, amounts to this:—Nature and the Torah are both parts of that total reality of which God is the author; in both alike we must discriminate between the facts and the interpretations or explanations of those facts; in both the adequacy of an explanation depends on its covering the facts concerned, or, if you like, on the facts fitting into the explanation; in any case, whether a satisfactory explanation of the facts has been discovered or not, the reality of the facts is beyond dispute; hence the "components of the Torah remain" indubitable facts, whatever explanation we may suggest, or fail to suggest, as regards their composition and value. So far, so good. That, however, is yet a long, long way from sustaining the inference that these "components of the Torah remain *the law*." For the actual facts constituting "the components of the Torah" are, of course, capable of diverse explanations—the explanations of the higher critics, for example, are not those of our Rabbi. But in adding those innocent-looking monosyllables, which at first sight make the assertion look like a "trifling" proposition, our Rabbi has gone a long distance beyond the bare facts, and has already taken his stand on a particular explanation of those facts. And to take a particular explanation for your starting-point, to count it as one of your facts, that is not characteristic of the improved scientific method which our author lauds so much, but rather of the *a priori* method, which he condemns as an anachronism. If it be urged, in mitigation, that the particular explanation is really included among "the components of the Torah," yet the fact of the explanation is one thing, its validity is another, and to assume its validity is only one (not the only one) explanation of that explanation regarded as a fact, that is, as a record.

Whatever one may say of modern Judaism, yet to describe it as "an anachronism, a relic of discarded scientific procedure, a lagging behind the progress and development of knowledge of modern times,"

is as unjust as it is paradoxical. The modernity of modern Judaism, the motive power that brings it into being, consists in that very desire to follow out scientific methods more consistently. This necessitates a much more accurate discrimination between facts and explanations, and between the fact of an explanation and the validity of that explanation, than seems to satisfy our critics. Moreover, Judaism can scarcely be said to be treated in accordance with "the improved methods of reasoning," unless due attention is also paid to the facts outside the Torah. In the above quotation, it is true, our Rabbi implies as much. "Two revelations (he says) are given us, Nature and the Torah. . . . One single opposing phenomenon . . . makes an assumption untenable." As a rule, however, our non-modern Rabbis have a knack of dismissing Nature with a compliment, and taking no further notice of her. The modernity of modern Judaism consists in taking these propositions seriously. The most scientific explanations of Nature and History are liable to disturb some of those views which go to the making of our religion. And the "modern" Judaism of every age is called into being by the need of re-adjustment.

Having given vent to our only grievance, we hasten to repeat our high estimate of Dr. Hirsch's book. The essays are all admirable. Even "Some Literary Trifles" is so good that it supplies a telling rejoinder to the author's own protest against people who "try to find out the sense of some allusion to things Jewish" in every author.

A. WOLF.

DR. FROMER'S JUDAISM.

Das Wesen des Judentums, von Dr. J. FROMER (Elias Jakob). Berlin, Hüpeden & Merzyn Verlag, 1905. Pp. 183.

THIS monograph is one of a series devoted to "Kulturprobleme der Gegenwart." Its red covers seem to foreshadow the sensational treatment of the Jewish question in which our author's temporary rancour finds vent. The *Introduction* consists of a brief autobiography, in which Dr. Fromer tells the now commonplace story of early Ghetto life and subsequent self-emancipation. One is reminded of poor Solomon Maimon, who emancipated himself from the drawbacks of the Ghetto, but, unhappily, also from much besides. Born in Russian Poland our author left home in his twentieth year, spent some time in Galicia as a teacher of Hebrew, and then studied Semitics and philosophy at a German university, where he obtained